

## Hoke County Natural Area Inventory

### FORT BRAGG LITTLE RIVER MACROSITE

Fort Bragg Little River Macrosite occurs along an eight mile stretch of the Little River (also known as Lower Little River), 2.5 miles of which are in Hoke County. It lies between NC route 690 and Manchester Road, south of the Overhills Sandhills Macrosite and north of the Central Fort Bragg Macrosite. The Macrosite lies within the Sandhills geological region of the coastal plain, but the Little River has cut deeply into hardened clay sediments (Cape Fear Formation) to form an impressive gorge-like aspect with slopes up to 80 feet high. The macrosite supports a very diverse array of plant community types, ranging from xeric river terraces to several kinds of longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) uplands, loblolly pine (*P. taeda*) flatwoods, cypress-gum swamps, floodplain forests, Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) groves, semi-open shrub-tree bluffs, extensive thickets of mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), streamheads, vertical seepage walls, and ponded depressions. Per unit area, this macrosite is ecologically the most diverse in Hoke County. Nearly 600 species of plants have been documented here. Within this setting occur many species of plants that, although not rare in North Carolina, are unusual or rare in the county. Notable are several species normally associated with the mountains, such as galax (*Galax urceolata*), Catesby's trillium (*Trillium catesbaei*), and roundleaf sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*).

There are seven standard sites within the Macrosite, but only three and part of a fourth occur within Hoke County. Much of the uplands have been disturbed in the past and parts of the river terraces were converted to pine plantations. However, in recent decades fire has been restored to the landscape and non-native pines are being harvested and replaced with native species. The core areas immediately along the Little River and its banks and bluffs remain in a natural state.

Among the notable features in the Macrosite are three rare plant community types. Little River Bluff and Little River Seepage Bank are globally rare and nearly restricted to Little River and Rockfish Creek (the Little River Seepage Bank community also occurs at Willis Creek in extreme southern Cumberland County). Mesic Pine Flatwoods (Little River Variant) occurs only at scattered sites along Little River, so far as is known. Many rare animal and plant species have been documented within the Hoke portion of the Macrosite. Federally Endangered species include red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), roughleaf loosestrife (*Lysimachia asperulifolia*), and Michaux's sumac (*Rhus michauxii*). Among the many state rare species are Bachman's sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*), Georgia indigo-bush (*Amorpha georgiana* var. *georgiana*), resinous boneset (*Eupatorium resinosum*), Alabama beaksedge (*Rhynchospora crinipes*), and Carolina pineland-cress (*Warea cuneifolia*). The indigo-bush, the beaksedge, and the pineland-cress occur nowhere else in Hoke County.